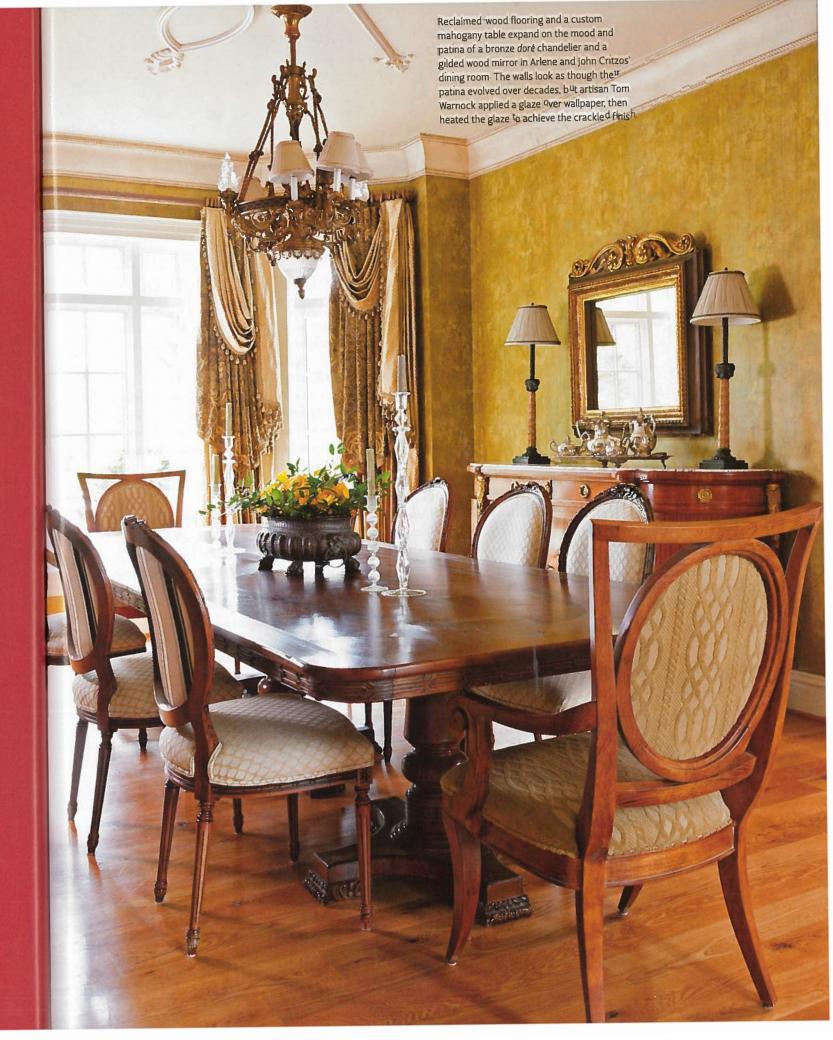
Inspired by old finishes she'd studied in Italy, a Maryland interior designer builds a family home for the ages.

## Lasting

Written by SUSAN STILES DOWELL Photography by GORDON BEALL Produced by EILEEN DEYMIER



Decades before drawing up plans, some interior designers nurture a vision of the home they want for themselves.

With every project, antiques auction, or country traveled, they accrue incentive for the day of ground-breaking. Interior designer Arlene Critzos traces tendrils of the inspiration for her 17,000-square-foot old-world-style villa near Annapolis, Maryland, to her days as a decorative arts student in Rome. That's when she first saw the effects of time on Italy's stone and painted surfaces. "I witnessed the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, which Michelangelo had painted nearly five centuries earlier, getting cleaned, and I saw the columns of buildings on the Piazza del Puopolo carefully stripped of layers of pollution," she says. "It was a revelation to see how the original surfaces had aged. Nothing could alter the beauty of their essential patina."

Arlene's fascination with all things old-world has inspired the decor for numerous residential projects on four continents, and it served as

the foundation for the Chesapeake Bay residence she shares with her husband, John. "I wanted a dignified European-style house with the patina of age on its wood, plaster, paint, and stone components," she says. "I like living with the authenticity of the old, but I have two sons, and I wanted living finishes that would grow better with time and use."

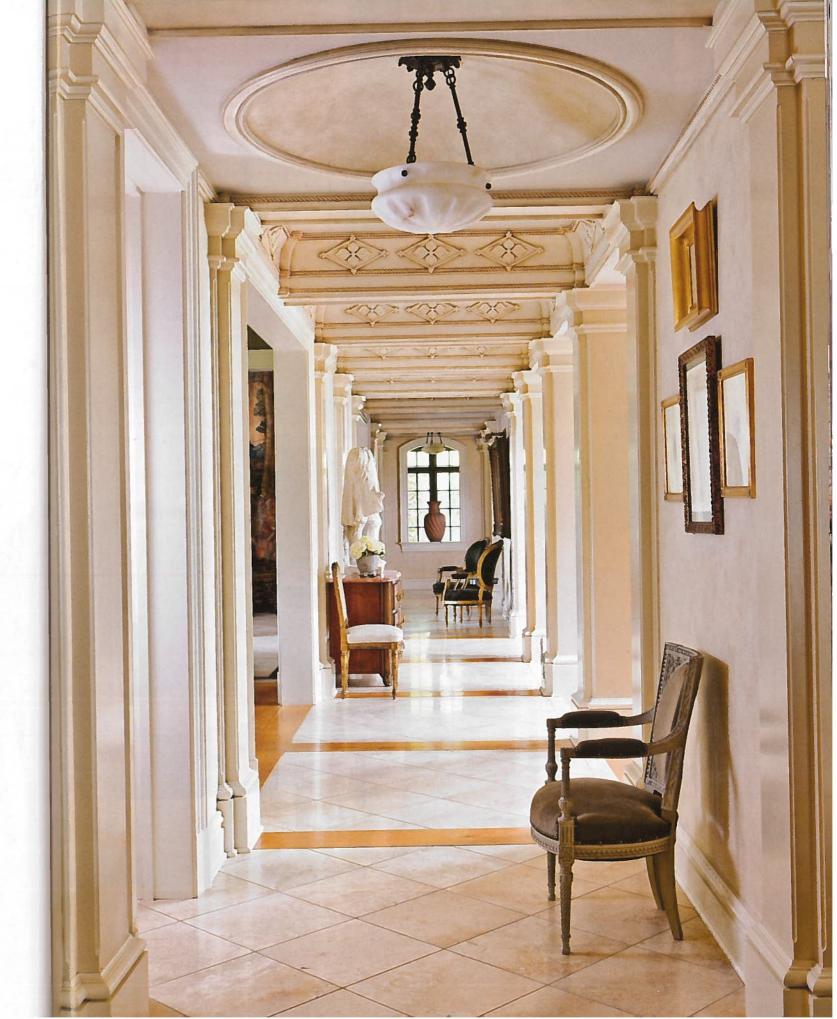
Working with architect David Riegel, Arlene incorporated antique European architectural elements into the design. A 12×12-foot wall of doors from a French château brings stately proportions and the warmth of timeworn walnut to the living room. Old oak milled into floorboards glows in the dining room and in the adjoining hallway, where the wood extends in sections into honed-marble tiles. "Honed marble is more sympathetic to patinaed finishes," Arlene says about the Venatino marble she chose to complement the hall's crème-color cast plasterwork.

In the foyer, soaring ceilings accommodate a Belgian tapestry Arlene was never able to display to its full length in her former home. The tapestry influenced the color scheme throughout the house; its parchment tone translates well to faux-aged paint surfaces, while its green hues inspired a special treatment in the dining room. "I wanted my dining room walls to have the look of a Medici villa from the Renaissance, carefully plastered and painted and then left to the hands of time," Arlene says. Artisan Tom Warnock found a way to distress a patterned wallpaper using a glazing technique that mimics the look of walls in a centuries-old Tuscan villa.

The framework of authentic architectural parts and aged finishes paved the way for a mix of furnishings. "I like everything from old to contemporary as long as the classicism feels right," Arlene says. But the uniting factor is an aura of age. Pointing out the cabriole legs on the living room's reproduction scroll-back sofa, Arlene says: "The finish was scrubbed to look old. Nothing is ever too small to consider."



ABOVE: Gothic-shape windows, varying rooflines, and a combination of stucco and stone lend this new home in Annapolis, Maryland, timeless allure. OPPOSITE: A gallery hall on the main level features plasterwork pilasters and ceiling medallions. The terra-cotta urn at the far end is an antique from Pompeii, Italy.



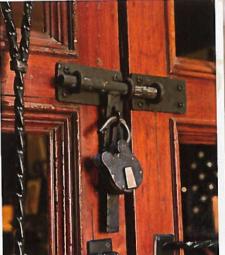
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"I acquired large pieces at auction in order to establish the scale and mood of age I wanted for the house."

ARI ENE CRITZO

OPPOSITE: Italian mosaics embedded in the kitchen's tile floor set off islands designated for eating and serving. Arlene complemented the warm glow of the pine islands with a plaster range hood trimmed in Italian terra-cotta. ABOVE LEFT: A carved-wood counter from an 18th-century French butcher shop houses the kitchen sink. ABOVE MIDDLE: Arlene commissioned a latch bolt and window grilles to create a noteworthy entry to the wine cellar. ABOVE RIGHT: This 19th-century Belgian tapestry determined the height of the foyer walls and the aged tone of the house's color palette. Several sets of antique Italian torchères flank a refectory table in front of the tapestry. LEFT: The wine cellar is built of stone and timber to look like a European vintner's cave. A bar inset with wine barrel ends runs the length of one wall.

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"I felt it was important to create a clean, simple decor that was also sophisticated. I wanted today's luxuries but with a distinct reference to the past."

-ARLENE CRITZ